



# NEWS RELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

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## Pile burning reduces wildland fire risk

Residents of Lincoln County can expect smoky skies for several months.

Smoke will be highly visible beginning January 4<sup>th</sup> and continuing through April 2004, as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) begins a pile-burning campaign in the Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The 24,000-acre ACEC is 70 miles west of Roswell and 11 miles northeast of Ruidoso. The Upper Rio Bonito Subdivision, Ranches of Sonterra that borders the ACEC western boundary and the Eagle Creek Ranch on the southern edge will see the smoke on a regular basis.

Heaped together pinion and juniper limbs, called slash piles, have been ageing in the ACEC from eight months to two years. The piles were created from various hazardous fuels reduction projects, such as thinning pinion and juniper trees in overgrown areas, to reduce the overall risk of wildland fire to the area.

“Right now is the safest time to burn these piles,” said BLM Fuels Management Specialist Allen Wyngaert. “The surrounding fuels are light, the piles are safer to burn because they have been ageing and there is minimal likelihood of escape because of the winter weather and ground conditions.”

Burn operations will be conducted in conjunction with wet weather conditions, such as following snow or rain, which will limit unplanned ignitions and smoke impacts to the public and local residences.

The BLM will notify local State and federal fire departments and the Sheriffs Office on all days that burning is conducted. Please feel free to contact your local fire departments with concerns of smoke in the area.